

### Adult and continuing education in Norway

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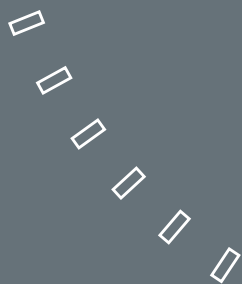
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Sturla Bjerkaker

# Adult and Continuing Education in Norway

» LÄNDERPORTRÄTS «



Länderporträt

Sturla Bjerkaker

# Adult and Continuing Education in Norway

Open Access

## Country Reports on Continuing Education

A Series of the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning

The book series provides quick access and initial orientation regarding the characteristics and features of continuing education in the individual countries. The volumes combine country-specific data and information on a scientific basis. A comprehensive service section facilitates further enquiries. On this base, continuing educators from research, practice and administration are able to prepare co-operation activities.

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## Preliminary Notes

The interconnectedness of adult education, learning and its socio-political environment (persons and organizations, aims and educational concepts, as well as the labor market) is closer than that of universities and schools. Political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the particular national environment not only provide the general framework for adult education and learning, but are also under their influence.

There are various reasons for that. First of all, adult education has become an integral part of people's lives. Learning is considered a lifelong process in which knowledge, new competencies, skills and behavioral patterns are acquired. In addition, learning occurs not only on an individual level, but all economic development as well as democratic participation of the individual requires formal and informal learning.

Hence, the appearance of adult education and learning can be quite interlaced, confusing and complex. It varies from presentations, weekend seminars, courses of longer duration up to long-term vocational training. It occurs in companies, in educational organizations, at home, in cultural institutions and in the media. It is subject to different political and legal contexts. Sometimes, adult education is financed by official or state funds, sometimes by project resources; increasingly it is structured by the market.

The various "systems" of adult education that are embedded in national and regional traditions are hard to compare with each other. This becomes obvious when supra-regional and transnational projects with common interests and experiences are aspired to. The European Union is an excellent example for a process in which such differences are becoming more and more visible.

Stakeholders in research, practice and politics of adult education are more and more and more often confronted with the necessity to communicate and cooperate with partners in other nations on a professional level. Here, content, funding, reputation and interests become relevant. Cooperation and communication may be inefficient if the knowledge about conditions and structures in other European regions is insufficient. Especially when it is about details in cooperative structures, a lack of knowledge can turn into a problem.

If you want to cooperate with European partners, an overview about the situation of adult education and adult learning in other countries can be very helpful, since it puts partial information into context. This can be the base for further exploration.

The German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning continues its established series of reports on adult education in other European countries with this volume on "Adult and Continuing Education in Norway". Volumes on Austria, Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Spain, Switzerland, Cyprus and France have been published in the last ten years. This loose series shall be continued. All volumes about non-German speaking countries will be published in English and Open Access. Readers who prefer traditional books may order a print version for a small amount from W. Bertelsmann Verlag.

The series “Länderporträt” by the DIE provides a beneficial base for European adult education politics and one’s individual practice in continuing education.

*Josef Schrader*

German Institute for Adult Education –  
Leibniz-Centre for Lifelong Learning



# 1. Introduction

## General Information

*Norway – the long, small and cold country up north with all the beautiful fjords and the very long coastline ...*

*Norway – the country with so many resources in the sea – oil, gas and fish ...*

*Norway – with all its waterfalls and the lights always switched on in every room in every house ...*

*Norway – a Nordic country well known for its lifelong learning traditions ...*

Norway – officially the Kingdom of Norway – is a sovereign and unitary monarchy whose territory comprises the western portion of the Scandinavian Peninsula plus Jan Mayen and the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. The Antarctic Peter I Island and the sub-Antarctic Bouvet Island are dependent territories and thus not considered part of the Kingdom. Norway also lays claim to a section of Antarctica known as Queen Maud Land. Until 1814, the Kingdom included the Faroe Islands (since 1035), Greenland (since 1261) and Iceland (since 1262).

Norway has a total area of 385,252 square kilometres (148,747sq miles) and a population of 5,109,059 people (2014). The country shares a long eastern border with Sweden (1,619 km). Norway has borders to Finland and Russia in the north east, and the Skagerrak Strait to the south, direction Denmark. Norway has an extensive coastline, facing the North Atlantic Ocean and the Barents Sea.

King Harald V of the House of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg is the current monarch of Norway. Erna Solberg, representing a right-wing coalition government, became Prime Minister in 2013, replacing Jens Stoltenberg of the Social Democratic Party. Norway has been a constitutional monarchy since 1814: state power is divided between the Parliament, the King and his Council, and the Supreme Court. Between 1661 and 1814, Norway was an absolute monarchy; before 1661, the King shared power with the Norwegian nobility. Traditionally established in 872 and originating in one of several petty kingdoms, Norway is one of the original states of Europe and amongst the oldest existing kingdoms worldwide. The Kingdom has existed continuously for over 1,100 years, and the list of Norwegian monarchs includes more than sixty kings and earls.

Norway has both administrative and political subdivisions on two levels, known as counties (*fylkeskommuner*) and municipalities (*kommuner*). The Sámi people – most of them living in the northern part of the country – has a certain degree of self-government and influence over traditional territories through the Sámi Parliament (*Sameparlamentet*) and the Finnmark Act (*Finnmarksloven*, 2005).

Norway rejected full EU membership in two referenda (1972 and 1993) but maintains close ties with the European Union and its member countries. Together with Iceland and Liechtenstein, the country has a trade deal with the EU (EØS) and is part of educational programmes (Erasmus+), for example, along with the regular EU member countries. Norway is also part of Horizon 2020, the EU research programme.

Norway is a founding member of the United Nations, NATO, the Council of Europe, the Antarctic Treaty and the Nordic Council; a member of the European Economic Area, the WTO and the OECD; it is also a part of the Schengen Area.

The country maintains a combination of a market economy and a Nordic welfare model with universal health care and a comprehensive social security system.

Norway has extensive reserves of petroleum, natural gas, minerals, lumber, seafood, fresh water, waterfalls and hydropower. The petroleum industry accounts for around a quarter of the country's gross domestic product.<sup>1</sup> The country has the fourth-highest per capita income in the world on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) lists. On a per capita basis, it is the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas outside the Middle East. From 2001 to 2006, and then again from 2009 to 2014, Norway had the highest Human Development Index ranking in the world. Norway has also topped the Legatum Prosperity Index for the last five years.

Norway is probably one of the world's most developed democracies and states under the rule of law. In 1814, around 45 percent of men (25 years and older) had the right to vote, whereas the United Kingdom had around 20 percent (1832), Sweden 5 percent (1866), and Belgium 1.15 percent (1840). In 1913, all citizens, including women, received the right to vote.

Norway has been an independent and sovereign state since 1905, being in union with Denmark for almost 400 years up to 1814, and with Sweden between 1814 and 1905. Norway got its own constitution in 1814, celebrating its bicentennial in 2014. Each year on 17 May, Norway celebrates its independence and constitution, not by parading tanks and weapons but by having schoolchildren wave flags and brass bands play friendly music.

## Religion

At baptism, most native Norwegians are registered as members of the Church of Norway, which until the constitutional amendment of 21 May 2012 was the official state church. The constitution still requires that the reigning monarch must be Lutheran and that the country's values are based on its Christian and humanist heritage. Many remain in the church to participate in the community and in practices such as baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial rites, which have a strong cultural stand-

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers from 2015.

ing in Norway. On January 1, 2015, about 75 percent of Norwegians were members of the Church of Norway. In 2014, about 60 percent of all new-borns were baptised, and about 63 percent of all 15-year-olds received their confirmation in church. However, only 20 percent of Norwegians say that religion has an important place in their life (according to a 2009 Gallup poll), which is the fourth-lowest such percentage in the world – with only Estonia, Sweden and Denmark being lower.

Due to immigration and the free labour market in Europe, Norway's population is growing, with people coming from Poland and other parts of Eastern and Central Europe, for example, resulting in an increase in the number of Muslims and Catholics.

## Education

Compulsory schooling in Norway is ten years, and children start school at the age of six. Primary and lower secondary education is founded on the principle of a unified school system that provides equal and adapted education for all on the basis of a single national curriculum.

Norway introduced universal schooling for children nearly 250 years ago. In 1889, the period of compulsory education was initially set at seven years. In 1969, this was raised to nine years and then to ten years in 1997.

The collective objectives and principles for teaching in primary and lower secondary schools are laid down in the national curriculum. The curriculum for primary and lower secondary education includes:

- a Core Curriculum for primary and lower secondary, upper secondary and adult education;
- principles and guidelines for primary and lower secondary education;
- curricula for individual subjects.
- The subject curricula define common learning contents for all pupils, increasing in scope throughout their school careers and peaking at the lower secondary stage. This common learning content is to be adapted to local conditions and to the needs of individual pupils.

## The Sami curriculum

The culture and traditions of the Sami community are part of the common Norwegian and Nordic culture, which all pupils have to be acquainted with according to both the national curriculum and the special Sami curriculum. In areas defined as Sami districts, and according to specific criteria elsewhere in Norway, this teaching is in accordance with the special Sami curriculum.

For Sami pupils, this teaching intends to build a sense of security in relation to pupils' own culture and to develop the Sami language and identity, as well as to en-

able Sami pupils to take an active part in the community and to acquire education at all levels. State support is provided for the development of textbooks written in the Sami language. The Sami College has a special responsibility for training Sami teachers. The University of Tromsø has responsibility for Sami language and Sami studies.<sup>2</sup>

## Responsibility for education

The Norwegian Parliament and the government define the goals of education and decide on the budgetary frameworks for education. The Ministry of Education and Research, Norway's highest public administrative agency for educational matters, is responsible for implementing national educational policy. A common standard is ensured through legislation and through national curricula.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) represents the central government at the regional level. In cooperation with municipal and county authorities, the National Education Office ensures that appropriate schooling is provided for young people in compliance with all regulations concerning the school. It also ensures the provision of adequate adult education facilities.

The municipalities are responsible for running primary and lower secondary schools, while county authorities have responsibility for upper secondary schools. Within the framework of statutes and national curricula, municipalities, schools and teachers are able to decide what learning materials to use and what teaching methods to adopt.

## Higher education

Regarding itself as a 'knowledge nation', Norway has a great need for people with high-level professional skills across a broad spectrum of fields. The government has set up a goal that everyone should be able to get an education regardless of their social background.<sup>3</sup> Welfare schemes for students are an instrument to achieve this. The government wants to change the structure of higher education to achieve solid specialist research communities and high-quality education.

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<sup>2</sup> There are around 50,000 to 80,000 persons belonging to the Sami people in Norway (The Sami Institute, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> After the 2013 election, a right-wing government ended an eight-year period of left-wing governments, but all political parties in the Parliament share this goal.

## Universities and university colleges

Norway currently has 8 universities, 20 university colleges and 5 scientific colleges owned by the state. Norway also has a large number of private higher education institutions, 23 of which receive government support. We have placed an overview of universities and university colleges in the Appendix.

Norway currently has 8 universities, 20 university colleges and 5 scientific colleges owned by the state. Norway also has a large number of private higher education institutions, 23 of which receive government support. We have placed an overview of universities and university colleges in the Appendix.

The University of Oslo, founded in 1813, is the oldest university in Norway. It is an ongoing process in Norway to merge universities and university colleges and to change university colleges into universities. On 1 January 2016, for example, the university colleges in Ålesund, Trondheim and Gjøvik merged with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim, making NTNU the largest university in Norway. Its main campus is Trondheim.

## Tertiary vocational education

Vocational education is an integrated part of upper secondary school, as one can choose between more theoretical orientations (preparing for higher education) or more practical orientations (preparing for vocational skills and work). A new law passed in 2010 established a new type of school for tertiary vocational education, the so-called *Fagskole*. Representing an alternative to higher education, it is based on upper secondary education and training or the equivalent informal and non-formal competence (recognition of prior learning, regardless of where the learning has taken place). A higher education entrance qualification is not required. Tertiary vocational education is, to a certain extent, regarded as a part of adult education.

## The formal educational system in Norway

The educational system in Norway is based on three levels, and hence similar to most other European countries. Adult education is part of each of these three levels. Figure 1 gives an overview of the formal educational system in Norway.

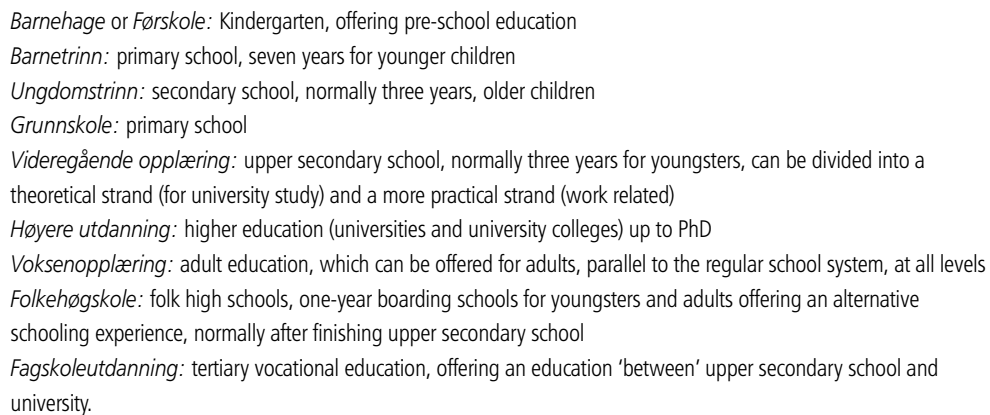


Figure 1: The educational system in Norway (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010)

## Adult education

The definition of the term ‘adult education’ varies by culture, country and context. According to Norway’s first Adult Education Act (1976), adult education is defined as the education an adult person participates in after and beyond his or her first traditional educational career. According to both the first and the second (2009) Norwegian Adult Education Act, one is considered an adult from the age of fourteen. This concerns non-formal adult education, which offers courses for all ages and curricula parallel to and as an alternative to the regular school system.

At the sixth world conference on adult education – Confintea VI (Belem, Brazil 2009) – UNESCO launched the term ‘adult learning and education’, referring both to adult education as a field of work and research and to the lifelong learning practices in which adults of all ages take part. This definition includes adult literacy and (other) basic skills.

Adult learning and education is a field in which adults engage in systematic and sustained educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It can be any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learner. In particular, adult education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can learn and want to learn, that they are able and willing to take responsibility for their own learning, and that the learning itself should respond to their needs.

Driven by what one needs or wants to learn, the available opportunities, and the manner in which one learns, adult learning is affected by demographics, globalization and technology. The learning happens in many ways and in many contexts just as all adults’ lives differ. Adult learning takes place in any of the following three contexts:

- formal – structured and organized education that typically takes place in an education or training institution, usually with a set curriculum, and carries credentials;
- non-formal – learning that is structured and organized by educational institutions but non-credential. Non-formal learning opportunities may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups;
- informal – learning that goes on all the time, not intended, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure.

Figure 2 describes the relations between formal, non-formal and informal adult learning and education.

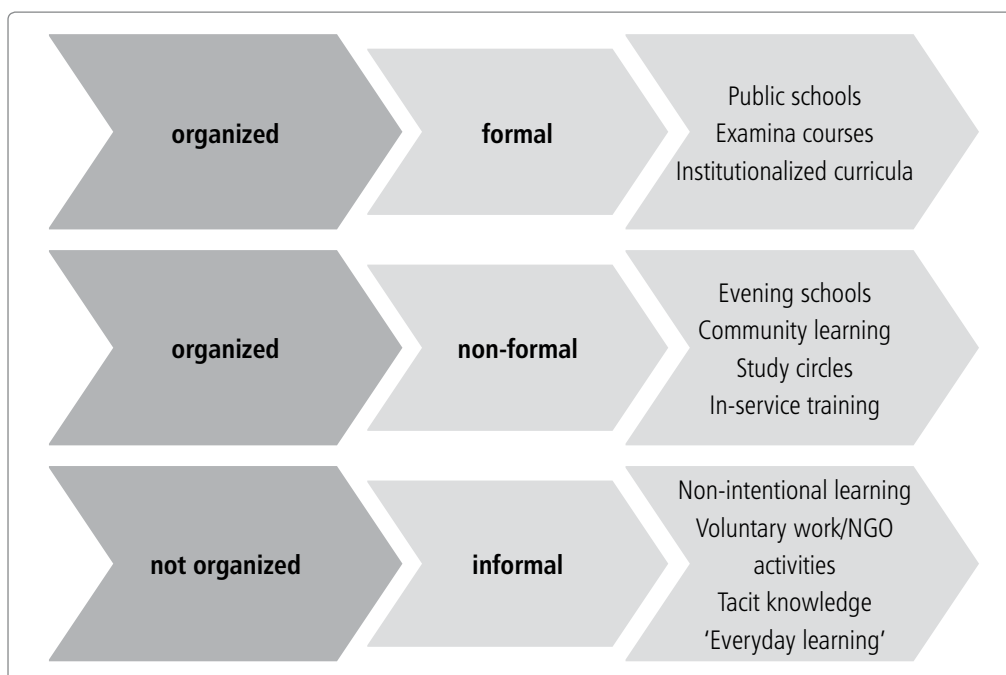


Figure 2: Relations between formal, non-formal and informal learning

## Adult education in Norway

The overarching goal for adult education in Norway is to provide everybody with the possibility of widening their competencies and developing their skills throughout life. This may help individuals improve their quality of life, create value and increase flexibility in working life. The competence and skills of the population are a major factor in securing economic growth, employability, competitiveness and cooperation.

Education for adults free of charge is a fundamental right guaranteed by law up to and including upper secondary school. Municipalities and counties both are responsible.

Adults who need primary and lower secondary education have a statutory right to such education. Adults also have a statutory right to upper secondary education. This applies to adults who have not already completed an upper secondary education.

## High levels of adult learning

Norway, like other Nordic countries, registers high levels of adult participation in education and training. The Nordic countries also see only minor differences in participation with respect to gender. Figures from the Adult Education Survey (AES) show that Sweden, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Norway have over 60 percent participation in adult learning. Sweden and Luxembourg have particularly high participation rates.



## The Education Act and the Adult Education Act

Adult education in Norway is regulated by the Adult Education Act (2009) (*Lov om voksenopplæring*) and the Education Act (2002) (*Opplæringsloven*). Under the Adult Education Act, the public education authorities at the various levels of education are responsible for the provision of courses. The Education Act regulates primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education for all students, including adults.

Higher education (universities and university colleges) is governed by a separate law, which applies to this level of education in general (regardless of students' age). In 2001, rules about validation in higher education were added to the law, giving adults a right to access higher education without having formally graduated from upper secondary school under special conditions (recognition of prior learning and practices).

There is a separate Act on Folk High Schools (*Lov om folkehøyskoler*) from 2002 saying that the purpose of a Folk High School is to promote general competence and popular enlightenment (*folkeopplysning*). Each school is responsible for defining its values within the framework of the law.

Along with learning in formal and non-formal structures, the workplace is of major importance as an arena for lifelong learning in Norway.

The Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (Vox) has a particular responsibility for improving the participation rate in adult learning, specifically in programmes focused on basic skills training at the workplace and beyond. Vox has particular competence in the fields of adults' legal rights and recognition and validation of prior learning. Vox also works in close co-operation with social partners and NGOs to advance adult learning in working life.

## Different discourses on adult education

There always have been and still are different ways to see adult education and learning. Although there is some overlap between these perspectives, I want to describe four of them here in brief.

### 1. Adult education is about basic skills and formal competences

Almost one-third of the adult population in Norway does not have sufficient skills in reading, writing and simple maths and ICT to cope with society's complexity. This challenge – discovered by the OECD surveys ALL, IALS and most recently PIAAC – is being taken quite seriously. On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (Vox) has developed programmes and offered funding for projects in which companies and adult education providers co-operate in different in-service basic skills training opportunities. In recent years, the Parliament has increased its spending for Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (*Basiskompetanse for arbeidslivet* – BKA): In 2016, approximately € 20 million will be spent on this programme.

The Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life can be seen as closely reflecting 'adult's rights'. Following the so-called Competence Reform (1998–2002), the

2002 Education Act brought a change by giving adults the formal right to complete upper secondary and high school education if they had failed to do so as young people. The public authorities at the county level are responsible for offering these opportunities to adults. Providers may include distance education schools, NGO-based adult education associations and adult education centres at public schools. The challenge is that there are still too many adults lacking basic education and skills, both in the native Norwegian population and among immigrants. Participation in learning provisions is still too low compared to needs, as those are defined by the school authorities.

## 2. Adult education is about further and continuing education

Skills do not last forever, or, if they do, they might not be sufficient for today's needs. In other words, there is always a need for updating one's knowledge, and there is very often a need for acquiring new skills and competences at the workplace, especially those that address new and complex technology. An architect who graduated in 1980 cannot successfully function in his work environment today without attending further and continuing education courses. Drawings are done on screen today, no longer on transparent paper. ICT technology has influenced many professions for many years. Therefore, further and continuing adult education is a big issue: as in-service training, as courses run by companies, and as a profession by university colleges, universities, companies and others. The labour market authorities also offer further education opportunities such as labour market courses, re-schooling for new professions and the like. It is not only a question of upskilling but of learning new skills for completely new professions. The old professions do not exist anymore, and the need (e.g. in the health sector) is constantly increasing.

## 3. Adult education is about learning for its own sake – learning for joy

People go to courses and study circles and have done so in the past. For example, they may attend language courses for no other reason than the joy of learning something new or of being able to order a meal in Spain or somewhere else. A wide range of topics might be added: gardening, fishing and hunting, handicraft, folk dance and music, guitar and drums, singing, knitting, and modelling. 'Adult education should help give adults a more meaningful life', to quote the first Adult Education Act from 1976. The slogan 'learning for its own sake' is relevant in this context. Here, Norway's 15 NGO-based adult education associations, together with a wide range of voluntary civil society organizations as members, have made a great effort for more than 75 years to meet this goal of the adult learning and education landscape. This is learning without exams. State support is given when certain conditions are fulfilled. Many of these courses or study circles are easy to join, the threshold is low, and the challenges come softly.

#### 4. Adult education is about learning for active citizenship and democracy

Adult education has played a historic role in all the Nordic countries, which has to do with the rise, development and maintenance of democracy. Democracy has to be learned anew by every new generation; it is not learned once and forever. Popular enlightenment and people's own enlightenment has for almost 200 years played a crucial role for developing democracy. Education for democracy includes general knowledge about the 'content of society', the functions in society, elections, political representatives, the parliamentary system, the ways in which people can influence the political system, and so on. It is also important in this field to learn to be critical of the establishment and to cope with the available information, which is overwhelming. Learning how to run organizations and meetings is also important. Which mechanisms must be in place to manage a decision-making meeting properly? How do we deal with decision-makers, people in power, or consumer rights? Learning for democracy – in all its facets – will be the greatest challenge of adult learning and education or for lifelong learning in the years to come.

### Stakeholders

There is a wide range of stakeholders and providers offering adult learning and education of almost all kinds. The most common ones are:

- Adult education centres (Voksenopplæringssentra), which exist in almost every municipality (428 municipalities in total around the country) and county (19)
- Resource and career centres (Ressurs- og karrieresentra) at the county level (16 centres)
- NGO-based adult education associations (Studieforbund)
- Boarding folk high schools (Folkehøgskoler)
- Distance education schools (Nettskoler)
- Enterprises and private companies providing further and continuing education
- Further and continuing education departments and divisions at universities and university colleges
- Tertiary vocational education schools (Fagskoler)

### Sectors providing adult learning and education in Norway

#### The public sector (rights and duties)

The *public sector* represents the state, the counties and the municipalities, which are responsible for different parts of formal adult education according to the Education Act and other legislation.

#### The private sector (market and money)

The *private sector* represents enterprises and companies, which offer all forms of adult education according to market conditions. It could be in-service training, training in cooperation with other stakeholders, or courses offered on the private market.

The private sector may include providers of formal, non-formal and informal education and learning.

**The NGO sector (volunteerism and idealism)**

The *NGO sector* represents the NGO-based adult education associations, other NGOs and the folk high schools, offering mostly non-formal learning and education with public funding according to legislation. The NGO-based adult education associations may also offer formal education on behalf of and in cooperation with the public sector, for instance upper secondary education for adults in cooperation with the counties.

## 2. Historical Development

The Nordic countries – especially Denmark, Norway and Sweden – have a tradition of adult learning and education that goes back more than 150 years.<sup>4</sup> This tradition started with a period of (popular) enlightenment in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, based on the recognition that knowledge for the people was a precondition for establishing and widening democracy.<sup>5</sup> In this period, the Danish priest Nicolai Frederic Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872) presented his ideas, which later evolved into the Nordic folk high school movement. The *Folkehøyskole* (folk high school) – originally established for young boys from the countryside – was meant to have a profile contrasting what Grundtvig called the ‘black school’, or ‘Latin school’. Grundtvig predicted that we would have to base our education on ‘the living word’ – through good lecturers – rather than on the ‘dead words’ we find in books. (That didn’t keep him from writing hundreds of books and thousands of pages in his life.) He was convinced that the emphasis should not be on predefined curricula and exams, but on ‘learning for, about and of life’.

Today, there are more than 400 folk high schools in the Nordic countries, mainly for young adults, and most of them acting as alternatives to the regular school systems. They still belong to the enlightenment tradition. In Norway alone, there are about 80 folk high schools – all of them residential boarding schools. The pedagogical philosophy of the folk high schools is providing an ‘around-the-clock education’ that emphasizes life both inside and outside the classroom.

Various kinds of enlightenment activities existed in Norway. The 1814 constitution gave rise to political, cultural and enlightenment developments. The author Henrik Wergeland became famous not only for his poems and writings but also for his work to educate farmers in the countryside about how to grow crops. In 1845, he established – not without a sense of humour – one of the first adult education organizations in the country, calling it ‘The Cabbage and Turnips Company’ (*Det norske kaal og rotselskap*), with Wergeland as the first and only member. Its aim was important though: to help small farmers grow traditional and foreign vegetables. In his time, Wergeland was an important promoter of democracy, enlightenment and public health.

At about the same time, in the early years of Norwegian democracy, priests and other intellectuals believed that being able to read, write and gain knowledge about society was a precondition for earning the right to vote – for taking part in democracy. Not least, this was important for the slowly growing labour movement. The

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<sup>4</sup> This tradition has many names, including ‘popular enlightenment’, ‘popular education’, ‘liberal education’, ‘adult community education’ and – more common today – ‘non-formal adult learning and education’. I will mainly use the term ‘adult learning and education’, which is the term the UNESCO launched at the 2009 Confintea VI conference in Brazil. Adult learning and education covers ‘formal’, ‘non-formal’ and ‘informal education and learning’.

<sup>5</sup> Norway got its first constitution in 1814. For 400 years, up to 1814, Norway was a part of Denmark, from 1814 in alliance with Sweden. Norway became an independent nation in 1905.

Thrane Movement (*Thranitterbevegelsen*), founded in 1849 by the radical workers' leader Marcus Thrane (1817–1890), started to give lectures for the lower classes. Workers' Academies (*Arbeiderakademier*) were established in many places in the country with the same purpose: 'education for the people'. These academies were not run by the workers, but for them. Later in the century, around 1880, the Workers' Academies changed their name to People's Academies (*Folkeakademier*). This non-governmental association (*Folkeakademienes Landsforbund*) still exists as one adult education provider among many.

In 1851, a couple of liberal and radical academics and school leaders, among them Hartvig Nissen, Ole Vig and Eilert Sundt, established the Association for the Promotion of Enlightenment (*Selskapet for Folkeoplysningens Fremme*), which had similar goals as the Thrane Movement but was rather neutral politically.

1864 was a very important year for the Enlightenment and for adult education in Norway. In this year, philanthropic university students founded the first university extension unit in Oslo. This movement grew over 150 years to become the largest adult education provider in the country, today called the Popular University (*Folkeuniversitetet*). In the same year, the first folk high school based on the ideas of Grundtvig was established in the city of Hamar, called *Sagatun*. Last but not least, the Workers Academy (*Arbeiderakademiet*) in Oslo was founded the same year.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the profile of adult education shifted slowly from a 'top down' to a 'bottom up' approach. In these years, the first political parties were founded: first the Liberal Party and in 1889 the Labour Party. At this time, the labour movements gained strength, and education was definitively seen as a tool for this development. The slogan became 'education for the workers, by the workers'. The workers' movement took education into its own hands. Workers founded evening schools and Sunday schools (Sunday was the only day off during the week). And in 1931, the Workers' Educational Association (*Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund*) was established and took the lead in the process for the working class to become the leading force in society. The workers' and the temperance movements,<sup>6</sup> which were quite strong in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, established their own 'learning tool', due to a lack of books and other educational resources, the so-called Study Circle (*Studieringen*). The Study Circle – along with the Grundtvigian folk high schools – is recognized as the most important 'export' from the Nordic countries in terms of adult education and lifelong learning.

The Study Circle is a self-directed and self-managed method for learning, usually in small groups of 5 to 12 persons, mainly without a teacher, but with an experienced Study Circle leader acting as facilitator and guide. The Study Circle is a democratic way of learning. The Study Circle movement started in Sweden at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and thousands of Study Circles are still running every year.

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<sup>6</sup> The temperance movement (*avholdsbevegelsen*) consisted of private organizations dedicated to fighting alcohol and drug abuse among the working and lower classes, as drinking in particular was a big problem in Scandinavia in those times.

## The Study Circle (*Studieringen*)

As a Nordic traditional method for liberal adult education, the Study Circle has been active for more than 100 years. From the beginning, the Study Circle has been seen as a democratic and emancipatory method and arena for learning, particularly among adults. Study Circles were born in New York in the 1870s. By their peak in 1915, 700,000 people were participating in 15,000 Study Circles in the USA. People close to the union, the co-ops, the temperance movement and the Social Democratic Party carried the idea to Sweden to educate their followers. Even though Study Circles more or less disappeared in the USA, they have flourished in Sweden and Scandinavia ever since. Even today, nearly three million Swedes participate in more than 300,000 Study Circles annually, partly funded and subsidized, but not controlled by, the public sector and the government. Scandinavian communities have even convened Study Circles to work through major issues facing their local areas and towns, with study circle participants turning into activists who then have a significant impact on events. The past ten years have seen renewed and blooming interest in Study Circles in the USA as well, according to the Study Circle Research Centre in New York.

The Study Circles followed the ‘top-down approach’ developed for Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, expressed by the university extension movements in France, England and Scandinavia, to become a ‘bottom-up’ method (Arvidson, 1998). The so-called founder of the Study Circle, the Swede Oscar Olsson, believed that the emancipation of the working class should be a task for workers themselves.

‘For the people, by the people’ (Johansson, 1994) became the political slogan that influenced the Study Circles and the adult education system in Scandinavia for years.

The close links between Study Circles as a *method* Study Circles and Study Circles as a *tool for democracy* may also be illustrated by what former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme said: ‘Sweden is to a great extent a Study Circle democracy.’<sup>7</sup>

The Study Circle is a human, easy and unthreatening learning opportunity for adults with low self-esteem and self-confidence. However, the Study Circle method is also demanding. It requires activity and dialogue between its participants, and occasionally, you can count on a teacher or an expert joining in. Normally the Study Circle is a group of equals, with the leader acting as *primus inter pares*. The pedagogical idea may be summarized as ‘learning by sharing’, relying on each member’s experience.

‘The Study Circle, which voluntary organizations claim to be their special method, for both ideological and educational reasons, has very much been taken for granted’, says Norwegian researcher Hallgerd Brattset in her study (cf. Brattset, 1982) on how to describe and analyse the experiences from methods of planning and organizing Study Circles.

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<sup>7</sup> Palme said this in his speech at the inauguration of the Nordic Folk Academy (NFA) in Kungälv near Gothenburg in 1968. The NFA was a centre for further and continuing education and training for folk high school teachers and study circle leaders in all the Nordic countries. The NFA was financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and closed down in 2004.



In the first annual report of the Norwegian Workers' Educational Association (*Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund*), published in 1932, we can read the following:

The Study Circle today is the most typical learning tool for workers' education. Its free way of working has made it the most suitable tool for the work of popular enlightenment. It does not have the rigidity of the evening class, nor does it have the image of school feared by many, especially older workers, nor the passivity of the lecture, nor the ineffectiveness of the discussion club. When the study circle organizes its work systematically – and with a specific theme –, it combines the best of the lecture, evening class, school, and discussion club.

## A period of growth

The 1930s were a new period of growth for adult education and enlightenment. In 1932, the national umbrella for non-formal adult learning and education was founded. Its name was *Samnemnda for studiearbeid*, later changed to *Voksenopplæringsforbundet* (the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning). A few years later (1936), the state established public funding for books to be used in the courses and Study Circles. In the same period, close cooperation began between the libraries and the course providers. Books could be bought, but of course also borrowed.

Concurrent with this development, correspondence schools were founded. The first one was the the Norwegian Correspondence School (*Norsk Korrespondanse Skole, NKS*), established in 1914. It started to offer distance courses for adults. The main tool was the letter. The school distributed lectures and questions by post, and the students answered in their return envelopes. Teachers at the schools validated the answers and gave the students feedback in new letters. 'Letter school' (*Brevskole*) was the well-known popular name for these schools. Later, these schools changed their profile along with the technological development. Today, we find the rests of some of these schools as distance education institutions, using ICT-platforms and the internet. For quite a long period, from the 1960s to the 1990s, a common method in adult education was to combine the correspondence method with physical meetings of students at evening courses or Study Circles – “blended learning”.

For a long time, adult education was a domain of the NGO sector – as non-formal education – rather than the public sector. This changed in the 1960s. In 1964, the first White Paper 'On Adult Education' (*Om voksenopplæring*) passed the Parliament, providing a holistic approach to the field. Both formal and non-formal adult education were mentioned. The main rationale for this was the reform of primary education, changing primary school from seven to nine years. This reform occurred during the 1960s, and at the beginning of the 1970s, every municipality offered nine years of primary school for children. This created a need for adult education, because all adults only had seven years of schooling. This was the start of a growing period for formal adult education – adult education provided in parallel



to the regular school system. Large NGO-based providers like the Workers' Educational Association (*Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund*) and the Popular Universities (*Folkeuniversitetet*)<sup>8</sup> were given the opportunity to offer formal education for adults in evening and part-time classes.

Following the 1964 White Paper and the strong development of adult education in the subsequent period, Norway passed the world's first Adult Education Act (*Lov om voksenopplæring*) in 1976, effective from 1977 onwards. This act became primarily an act for funding and regulating the non-formal sector, the adult education associations. Increasing participation in non-formal courses and Study Circles could be observed. The law guaranteed a certain amount of public funding for all courses adhering to the conditions established by the law. However, after just three years, the Ministry of Education felt a loss of control and decided to change the funding guarantee. Since 1980, public funding for courses run by the NGO-based adult education associations has been limited and – in the period from 1980 until 2015 – the numbers of participants in such courses have decreased from 1.2 million to 0.5 million.

## Two strands

The development of adult education and learning in Norway has over the years followed two strands: formal and non-formal.

The first strand is the Enlightenment tradition described above – learning and education outside the public education system and often as alternatives or parallels to schools. This is still the largest part of adult education in Norway. According to the Norwegian Bureau of Statistics, more than half a million adults of Norway's five million inhabitants participate in evening courses, Study Circles and similar activities every year.

The second strand is 'right-based' adult education. This education is mainly run by the public sector, covering basic skills and primary, secondary and upper secondary adult schools. In addition, vocational education and training belong mainly to the second strand.

Today, the view on adult education has become more and more instrumental: It is expected to be a tool for employment and employability, a tool for all those who for whatever reason have dropped out of the regular education system and regular working life, and – last but not least – a tool to address immigration and refugee challenges. In February 2016, the Parliament passed a white paper about adult education as a tool to empower low-skilled and other people who for whatever reason have dropped out of society: Stortingsmelding 16 (2015–2016) *Fra utenforskap til ny sjanse* ('From outsiders to second chance').

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<sup>8</sup> The national umbrella for popular universities in Norway was founded in 1948.



### 3. Political and Legal Framework

Adult learning and education is very high up on the political agenda in Norway, like in most other European countries. The field of adult education has gone through a small number of reforms in the last 30 years. A Green Paper on ‘Lifelong learning’ was launched in 1986, giving employed people the right to educational leave. A so-called ‘Competence reform’ was launched in 1997 and lasted up to five years. This reform restated the right of employees to educational leave but did not offer public funding for this. The reform also launched a principle of ‘recognition of prior learning’, giving adults who did not complete upper secondary school the opportunity to access higher education without a formal diploma. The reform was the rationale for changes in the Education Act, giving adults the right to free upper secondary school if they did not complete this stage in their youth.

#### The Education Act (*Opplæringsloven*)

The Education Act of 17 July 1998, related to primary and secondary education and training (with the latest amendments in force as of 1 August 2010), covers primary, lower and upper secondary general education and vocational education and training (VET), including apprenticeship training for young people and adults, delivered by both public and private institutions. The act regulates the objectives and scope, the organization and division of responsibilities, and the financing and content of education and training.

The act states that the *Kunnskapsdepartementet* (Ministry of Education and Research) is responsible for the development of national plans and financing arrangements, whereas the *Fylkeskommuner* (counties) and the *kommuner* (municipalities) are responsible for developing comprehensive plans, organizing delivery and allocating funding within their jurisdiction.

The Education Act concerns primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education in public schools and public training establishments unless otherwise specifically is laid down in the Act.<sup>9</sup> The object of primary and lower secondary education shall be, in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society. Upper secondary education shall aim to develop the skills, understanding and responsibility that prepare pupils for life at work and in society, and assist the pupils, apprentices and trainees in their personal development. Upper secondary education shall contribute to increased awareness and understanding of fundamental Christian and humanist values, national cultural heritage, democratic ideals and scientific methods.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Opplæringsloven, Oslo 2002, amended 2004 and 2005.

<sup>10</sup> [www.regjeringen.no/en/historical-archive/Stoltenbergs-1st-Government/kuf/Andre-dokumenter/Brev/act-relating-to-primary-and-secondary-ed/2/id420513/](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/historical-archive/Stoltenbergs-1st-Government/kuf/Andre-dokumenter/Brev/act-relating-to-primary-and-secondary-ed/2/id420513/)

The Education Act also covers adults. In chapter four, adults are explicitly mentioned:

Education and training organized especially for adults: Persons above compulsory school age who require primary and lower secondary education have the right to such education unless they are already entitled to upper secondary education pursuant to section 3–1. The right to education normally includes the subjects required for the certificate of primary and lower secondary education for adults. Educational provisions shall be adapted to individual needs. (...) No charge shall be made for instruction or teaching materials. (...) Adults who either do not or are unable to benefit satisfactorily from the ordinary educational provisions for adults have the right to special education. Adults with a special need for training in order to develop or maintain basic skills have the right to such training. (...) Adults who have completed primary and lower secondary education or the equivalent but who have not completed upper secondary education have the right to take upper secondary education. Adults admitted to upper secondary education have the right to complete the full course. (...) No charge shall be made for instruction. (...) Adults entitled to upper secondary education have a right to assessment of prior learning and to a certificate of competence. Persons not entitled to upper secondary education shall receive an assessment of prior learning if so referred by the municipality, Public Employment Service or National Insurance Service. (...) In fulfilling their duty to provide education for adults, municipalities and county authorities may use the services of adult education associations, distance education institutions and other institutions providing primary and secondary education (Opplæringsloven, the Education Act, kapittel 4A, with amendments from 2005).

### **The Act Relating to Tertiary Vocational Education and Training (*Lov om fagskoler*)**

The 2003 Act (last amended in December 2010) regulates public and private post-secondary vocational education and training at levels above upper secondary school but lower than university level, with courses and programmes lasting between six months and two years. Education and training at this level is not a part of higher education but is considered in between upper secondary school level and the university level. Employability is a keyword for this kind of education. The main purpose of the Act is to ensure and promote quality provision, and to ensure students' rights. The providers under this Act design their own courses and curricula. Each programme must be recognized by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (*Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen, NOKUT*), according to a regulation on quality assurance in higher and vocational post-secondary education as well as rules and procedures laid down by NOKUT.

### **The Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges (*Lov om universiteter og høyskoler*)**

This 2005 Act (last amended in 2009) applies to all higher education institutions, both public and private. The Act regulates organizational and management aspects, the recognition of the study programme, examination and certification, quality assurance as well as the learning environment for students.

### **The Act of Adult Education (*Lov om voksenopplæring*)**

The Act passed the Parliament (*Stortinget*) in June 2009 (effective from 2010) and is based on the first Adult Education Act from 1976. After more than 30 years, it was time for renewal. The Ministry of Education and Research launched a white paper on adult education in 2006 to prepare a new or amended law. This new Adult Education Act passed the Parliament in June 2009. Like the first act from 1976, it is a law regulating the non-formal education offered by the NGO-based adult education associations. The act constitutes adult education associations as legally and publicly recognized providers and representatives of their member organizations, which are approximately 480 to 500 voluntary organizations nationwide. The act sets up rules for the funding system for the courses and Study Circles run by the associations and also defines how these courses must be organized to be eligible for funding. The law sets up six overarching goals for the associations to promote, among them: Adult education should contribute to maintaining and developing democracy and sustainable development; likewise, it should promote inclusion in society, not exclusion.

The law also defines rules for distance education and for a special kind of private school, but for the field of adult education, the law is most important for the adult education associations. The law covers the forms of adult education which are not covered by the Education Act. Education and training for adults is provided by a variety of public, voluntary and private institutions.

According to this law, classrooms and other facilities at public schools should be offered free of charge to providers of non-formal adult education.

### **The Act Relating to Master Craftsperson Certificates (*Lov om mesterbrev*)**

This 1986 Act establishes the framework for the *Mesterbrev* (master craftsperson certificate). It stipulates that only persons who have been awarded the certificate are entitled to call themselves *Mester* (master craftsperson). This also includes adults.

### **The Act for Financial Support to Students (*Lov om utdanningsstøtte til elever og studenter*)**

This 1985 Act (last amended in 2005) states that all students (including young adults) registered in formally recognized study programmes at both public and private higher education institutions are eligible to receive grants and subsidized loans from the *Statens lånekasse for utdanning* (State Educational Loan Fund) for subsistence costs. Support is also provided to Norwegian students abroad, who may receive additional

support for travel, entrance and tuition fees. The same rights are given to students in upper secondary education and VET, including apprentices, who can document specific financial needs, as well as to apprentices who spend at least three months of their practical training abroad.

The main purposes of the act are:

- to improve equality of access to education and training regardless of geography, gender, age and financial situation;
- to improve students' working conditions and study efficiency;
- to ensure access to qualified labour for society.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning (*Realkompetansevurdering*)**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is used in upper secondary, post-secondary and higher education to increase the participation of adults. The following legal provisions relate to the recognition of prior learning:

- Adults have a statutory right to upper secondary education and training provided by the county authorities. The education should be adapted to the individual's needs and life situation. These adults also have a statutory right to have their prior informal and non-formal learning assessed towards the national curricula and documented by the county authorities. The assessment process may result in an exemption from parts of the training schedule and a shorter training period towards a full exam.
- The Education Act (§ 3–5) gives candidates for experience-based trade certification (*Praksiskandidat*) the right to take the trade or journeyman's examination without an apprenticeship. The candidate must demonstrate comprehensive experience in the field covering the objectives of the curriculum (apprenticeship training). The length of the candidate's work experience in the field must be equivalent to the length of subject's apprenticeship period plus 25 percent. This will normally involve a minimum of five years of practice. Relevant previous education is credited as practical training according to established rules. Almost half of all new trade and journeyman's certificates are awarded to these candidates.
- Adults can be admitted to post-secondary VET and to higher education based on an individual assessment of informal, non-formal and formal qualifications (RPL). For RPL-based admission to higher education, applicants must be age 25 or above.

The benefits of validation of prior learning have been recognized in a wide range of policy documents. Many adults have worked in a trade for years without much schooling and with no certificate. After having received recognition of prior learning, many adults get the opportunity to complete upper secondary school, for example, in a shorter period than the normal schedule.

### **The Introduction Act (*Lov om introduksjonsordning og norsk-opplæring for nyankomne innvandrere – Introduksjonsloven*)**

The Introduction Act passed the Parliament in 2004 with the latest amendments in 2005.<sup>11</sup> The Act regulates an introduction programme for newly arrived immigrants to Norway and aims to provide refugees with basic Norwegian language skills, provide basic insight into Norwegian social conditions, and prepare people for participation in working life. All municipalities that have refugees who are residents in the municipality have an obligation to provide an introduction programme. Participation in the municipal introduction programme is obligatory for refugees. As a minimum, the introduction programme must include Norwegian language training, social studies, and measures that prepare the participant for further education or access to working life. Upon completion or interruption of a programme, a certificate of participation shall be issued.

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<sup>11</sup> The Introductory Act will probably be changed due to the large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming to Norway these years. The white paper launched in February 2016 'From outsiders to a second chance' will be discussed in Parliament during 2016 and changes in the rules and regulations in the Act will be a part of this discussion.





## 4. Financing Adult and Continuing Education

There is a multitude of systems and options for financing adult education in Norway. The politicians and the public authorities have tried for many years to come up with a holistic and comprehensive system for organizing and financing the different strands of adult learning and education but have so far not had any success.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the public educational funding system. The Ministry has delegated some areas to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) and to the National Agency for Lifelong Learning (*Vox*). For Norwegian as a second language, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible qua the Introduction Act. According to this act, immigrants to Norway are offered a basic education in the Norwegian language free of charge. The curriculum primarily includes language training and knowledge about the main rules and regulations and culture in Norwegian society.

According to the Education Act, primary, lower and upper secondary education for adults is offered free of charge for students, including adults.

### **On behalf of the Ministry, Vox funds the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (*Basiskompetanse for arbeidslivet – BKA*)**

When an enterprise cooperates with an adult education provider to offer basic skills courses, they can apply for funding from Vox. Approximately 200 million NOK (more than € 20 million) will be spent on this programme in 2016. The enterprises can provide additional funding if necessary, and the courses are normally free of charge for the participants. The public funding (Vox) covers most of the costs.

A smaller programme next to the BKA program was introduced for the first time in 2015, and continues in 2016. It is a basic skills programme targeting adults who are unemployed, work in very small enterprises or for another reason have a need for reading and writing Norwegian properly. The providers for this programme are found in the voluntary sector, for instance the NGO-based adult education associations. The programme is called *Basiskompetanse for frivilligheten – BKF* ('Basic Skills and the Voluntary Sector').

### **The non-formal adult learning and education system**

As stipulated by the Adult Education Act, the non-formal adult learning and education system, which is run by the NGO-based adult education associations, is partly funded from public funds. Around 200 million NOK (more than € 20 million) are provided in 2016. This funding is divided into three parts:

- *basic funds*, which should be used for development work and teacher training by the associations, for example;
- *learning funds*, which are funds delivered to the local units for subsidizing the fees for the participants. This is the largest part of the total funding and covers approximately three quarters of the total spending;

- *adapted funds*, which are additional to the learning funds, offering extra subsidies for participants with special needs (e.g. handicapped people).

In total, this funding system offers an average of 5,000 NOK (a bit more than € 500) for each course, or 400 NOK (€ 40) per participant.

Additionally, participants have to pay individual fees for the courses, but the fees can vary according to costs, teacher fees and so on. For some courses, participants have to cover up to 90 percent of the costs; for other and cheaper courses, public funding covers up to 70 to 80 percent of the costs.

The publicly funded courses run by the adult education associations can use classrooms or other educational locations at public schools free of charge, as mandated by the Adult Education Act. This is an indirect type of public funding from counties and municipalities, which is considered valuable and important.

*Further education* (e.g. in-service training at the workplace) is normally covered by the companies.

*Continuing education* for adults at universities is normally organized as part-time studies and paid for by the students themselves, as most of them pursue their studies in addition to their daily work.

According to the Education Act, employees are entitled to take educational leave from their workplace to join relevant further and continuing education outside the workplace. There is so far no public funding for this right.

The social partners, and especially the trade unions, have funds for further and continuing education, for which their members can apply. For adult education, the trade unions usually cooperate with the Workers' Education Association (*Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund, AOF*), and they have their own adult education Centre outside Oslo. This centre was founded and started as a boarding folk high school in 1939.<sup>12</sup>

Activities in the non-formal sector peaked around 1980, with generous public funding for almost any kind of adult education course run by a multitude of more than 40 adult education associations nationwide. In 1980, around 140 million kroner were spent by the government for funding these courses and the providers. Almost 1.3 million participants joined the courses. In the 1970s and 1980s, language and ICT courses were popular, as well as courses related to culture, heritage, handicrafts and music. Since the beginning of the 1980s, there has been a slow decline over the years in participation. Public spending has declined as well, due to political conditions and a more instrumental approach to what (adult) education should be about. Right-wing politicians claim that it should not be a task for the state to fund courses that people attend for recreational purposes. By contrast, the political centre and left-wing politicians claim that most courses – regardless of subject – are valuable for people's engagement in society and democracy.

<sup>12</sup> The Sormarka Konferansehotell has gone through many changes since then ([www.sormarka.no](http://www.sormarka.no)).

A 1992 change in the 1976 Adult Education Act reduced the numbers of adult education associations from around 40 to 20, while the numbers of voluntary organizations associated with the associations continued to grow and today are close to 500. Some associations merged, and we got new and bigger ones, including *Musikkens Studieforbund* (adult education for music and song organizations) and *Studieforbundet Kultur og Tradisjon* (adult education for organizations dealing with culture, heritage, handicraft and Norwegian traditions). These associations have grown slightly in recent years. Public funding has been stable since 2010, and the total number of participants is around half a million (2015). Participation in the adult education associations' non-formal education offerings has developed as follows: 2002: 590,000 participants; 2010: 470,000 participants; 2015: 510,000 participants (SSB Statistics 2002–2015).

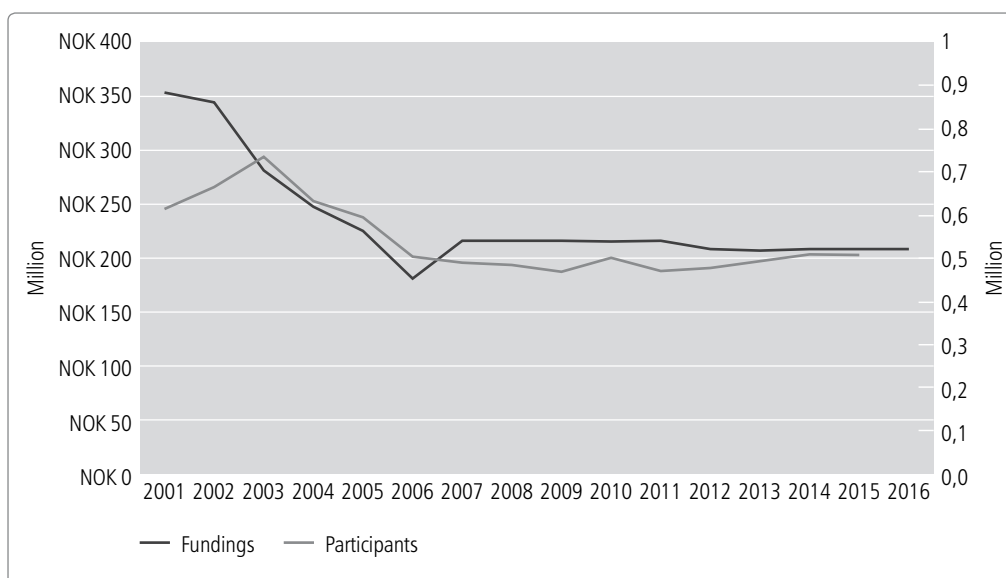


Table 1: Public funding and participation in non-formal adult education 2001–2016

This table shows the development in public funding for, and participation in, non-formal adult education programmes organized by the adult education associations in the period from 2001 to 2016 (participation up to 2015). Left: Numbers in million kroner. Right: Numbers in million participants.



## 5. Institutions

As adult learning and education is a fragmented area and a crossover field of work, we find a multitude of institutions fully or partly active in the field. The institutions can be both stakeholders and/or providers.

The main stakeholders are (in alphabetical order):

- the Association for Adult Education Centres (*Interesseorganisasjonen for kommunal voksenopplæring*) at the municipality level
- the Folk High School Council (*Folkehøgskolerådet*)
- the Ministry of Education and Research (*Kulturdepartementet*)
- the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL)
- the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL)
- the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (Vox)
- the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*)

The main providers are (in alphabetical order):

- adult education associations<sup>13</sup> – at the national, regional and local level
- adult education centres – at the municipality level
- distance education schools – at the national level
- folk high schools – mostly at the county level
- further and continuing education departments at universities and university colleges
- private institutes and schools targeting adults
- resource and career centres<sup>14</sup> – at the county level

Below is a short overview of the profiles and activities of the main stakeholders.

### The Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning – Vox

Vox is the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning and belongs to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The main goal of Vox is to contribute to supporting active citizenship, improving employability and increasing participation in education. Vox promotes access and participation in formal, non-formal and informal adult education through research, basic skills, integration, career guidance and programs and subsidies.

Vox is involved in international cooperation and is the current national coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Vox also acts as the secretariat for the National Council for Tertiary Vocational Education (*Nasjonalt fagskoleråd*), as well as for the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL).

<sup>13</sup> The adult education associations are also called study associations, which is a more direct translation of the Norwegian term *Studieforbund*.

<sup>14</sup> In some counties, these centres are called OPUS.

### ***Programmes and subsidies***

Vox administers governmental subsidies for the operational costs of study associations, distance learning institutions and study centres. Vox administers financial support for pedagogical development in study associations and distance learning institutions. Vox manages the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA) and directs subsidies for the operation of peace centres and human rights centres.

### ***Basic skills***

Vox contributes to the development of provision for individually adapted training in literacy, numeracy, ICT skills and oral communication skills for adults. In cooperation with education providers and enterprises, Vox develops methods based on established competence goal descriptions for adult basic skills. Vox works to establish further education options and continuing professional development for teachers and facilitators in this field.

### ***Immigrant integration***

Vox is in charge of curricular and pedagogical issues relating to the teaching of Norwegian and socio-cultural orientation to adult immigrants. The Agency monitors the implementation of the curricula and the national tests, initiates research and development and disseminates information to stakeholders in the field. A part of this task is the provision of professional development for teachers and facilitators in this field.

### ***Lifelong guidance and validation***

Vox coordinates the career guidance field in Norway through the National Unit for Lifelong Guidance. The main objective of the Unit is to improve the quality in career guidance and to promote equal access to career guidance services for young people and adults in all life stages. Vox has the national overview of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Agency aims to support quality development of validation processes, enhance the synergies between different stakeholders and increase the flexibility of learning pathways.

### ***Research***

Vox collects, analyses and disseminates evidence about adult learning, carries out research and publishes reports within the field of lifelong learning. Vox collects data from public registers and from surveys conducted by the Agency's own research department. Vox contributes to the body of statistical evidence on adult learning and documents needs and effects of measures and methods – for the individual, the political system and society.

### ***International cooperation***

Sharing knowledge and experience, both in Europe and beyond, is an integrated part of the activity in all departments at Vox. The Agency is actively engaged in the European Commission's work for the development of adult learning policy. Vox

coordinates and participates in international networks and research in the fields of basic skills, validation of non-formal and informal learning, career guidance, and the educational and social integration of immigrants.

Vox is the current Norwegian National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning. As National Coordinator, Vox represents the Norwegian Adult Learning sector in the EU Commission's working groups for the implementation of the agenda. As such, Vox is committed to disseminate the results of this work in national networks and acts as a communication channel between stakeholders in their country and corresponding institutions in European countries.<sup>15</sup>

The Agency's duties and responsibilities are designed in a mandate from the Ministry of Education and Research, and its tasks within the field of immigrant integration are designated in a mandate from The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

### **The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*)**

The Directorate is responsible for the development of kindergarten and primary and secondary education. The Directorate is the executive agency of the Ministry of Education and Research.

The Directorate has the overall responsibility for supervising kindergarten, education and the governance of the education sector, as well as the implementation of acts of Parliament and regulations. The Directorate is responsible for managing the Norwegian Support System for Special Education (*Statped*), state-owned schools and the educational direction of the National Education Centres.

The Directorate is responsible for all national statistics concerning kindergarten, primary and secondary education. Based on these statistics, the Directorate initiates, develops and monitors research and development.

The objective of the Directorate is to ensure that all children, pupils and apprentices receive the high quality education they are entitled to receive.

Hence, the Directorate is also responsible for formal adult education at the primary and secondary level.

### **The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL)**

NAAL is the national NGO umbrella for adult learning in Norway. Its members are 15 governmentally approved adult education associations with a member network of nearly 500 NGOs partly dealing with adult education.

NAAL has a central administration in Oslo and autonomous regional offices covering all 19 counties of Norway. It is run by a board of representatives elected democratically at the NAAL annual general assembly, where members are represented in proportion to their course activities.

<sup>15</sup> [www.vox.no/English/About-Vox/](http://www.vox.no/English/About-Vox/)

In 2014, the adult education associations, which are members of NAAL, ran about 40,000 courses with just above half a million participants, according to public statistics.

The aims and purposes of NAAL are:

- to advocate the common interests of the associations and their participants towards the government, the Parliament and the Ministry of Education;
- to promote non-formal adult learning in society in general;
- to advise members and other third parties concerning laws and regulations;
- to advise within the field of adult learning theory and practice;
- to counsel within educational planning;
- project coordination;
- advocacy and lobbying.

### ***Humanistic adult learning***

The common denominator of the adult learning organized by the NGOs is a profile of equality and equal opportunities. It is based on a humanistic adult learning theory and practice based on a belief in every person's potential for developing his or her life through lifelong learning.

Based on of the Norwegian Adult Education Act of 2009, the adult education associations receive grants from the government, most of the counties and many municipalities. The governmental grants for 2015 are just above 200 million NOK (ca. € 20 million). This funding has been slowly declining over the past 30 to 40 years.

### ***Adult Learners' Week***

Since 1998, NAAL has been the Norwegian coordinator of Adult Learners' Week. Throughout the country, local governments and all partners involved in adult learning use the Adult Learners' Week to inform about the wide range of available possibilities. It contains a multitude of conferences, stands, open classrooms and the like. The object of the international Adult Learners' Week, initiated by the 1997 UNESCO Adult Education Conference CONFINTEA in Hamburg, is to give adult learners stronger rights, motivation and opportunities for learning by broadly advertising and demonstrating the wide range of activities, methods and organizations and institutions available to them.

### ***International adult learning cooperation***

NAAL is a member of the Nordic network of adult education umbrella organizations – Folkbildning Norden – and a member of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). NAAL has been an active member and supporter of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) since 1980 with positions in the Executive Committee for more than 15 years. Different cooperation activities take place within these international networks, in close contact with the European Union and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).



### **The Folk High School Council and the Folk High School Associations**

The 78 folk high schools in Norway belong to two groups. A bit less than half of the schools belong to Christian and religious movements united in the Association for Christian Folk High Schools (*Noregs Kristelige Folkehøgskolelag*), the other half are gathered in the Norwegian Folk High School Association (*Norsk Folkehøgskoleforbund*), which organizes schools partly owned by counties, partly by NGOs, partly by a mix of stakeholders. Together, the two umbrella organizations run the Folk High School Council (*Folkehøgskolerådet*), which among other tasks does policy work and manages international contacts. The Folk High School Council is mainly financed by funds from the Ministry of Education and Research, whereas the two associations are funded by their member schools.

### **The Association for Adult Education Centres (*Interesseorganisasjonen for kommunal voksenopplæring, IKVO*)**

The Association for Adult Education Centres (IKVO) organizes most of the adult education centres at the municipality level and does policy and development work on their behalf. The association runs annual conferences on tasks that are crucial for the local centres, for instance Norwegian as a second language and basic skills.

### **Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL)**

The Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) was established in 2005, initiated and financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Up to 2017, NVL is administrated by Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning. In the Nordic region, a unique co-operation across national borders exists in many different fields. Co-operation in the adult education sector takes place under the auspices of NVL and the Nordplus Adult programme.<sup>16</sup>

NVL is a meeting place for Nordic adult learning and supports Nordic co-operation in a lifelong learning perspective. NVL disseminates experiences and innovations, highlights Nordic expertise and creates new co-operation models. The objectives of the NVL strive towards promoting lifelong learning by focusing on cross-sectoral cooperation. NVL transmits competence and experiences between the five Nordic countries and the three autonomous areas. The task of the network is to deepen Nordic competence and foster mutual learning. NVL publishes a monthly newsletter, which provides information about education policy in the Nordic countries, new structures, reforms and initiatives, as well as upcoming courses and conferences. NVL disseminates information about the experiences and results gained through Nordic co-operation on adult learning, primarily at the Nordic and European levels. All NVL networks participate in information

<sup>16</sup> The Nordplus programme is a project funding programme financed and run by the Nordic Council of Ministers, targeting both young people and adults (Nordplus Adult). At least two countries have to cooperate, and both the Nordic and the Baltic countries can join.

activities and create new knowledge by carrying out surveys, investigations, comparative studies and analyses.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://old.nordvux.net/page/872/inenglish.htm>

## 6. Provision

### The adult education associations: A multitude of interests

The adult education associations represent a multitude of interests and ideologies. The largest associations offer a broad range of themes on several levels, with or without formal exams and parallel programmes in the public school system. Other associations emphasize more voluntary adult learning activities, organizational training of members, learning for the development of the local community and sustainable development. Others emphasize political education, culture, and creative, aesthetic and practical topics. Today, there are 15 publicly recognized adult education associations.<sup>18</sup>

The largest is Popular University, offering formal, non-formal and work-related education almost everywhere in the country. Popular University has units in all the big cities and in many of the municipalities. They offer basic skills programmes in co-operation with the labour market. They also offer tailored education for companies, in addition to traditional evening courses for an open market.

Another large association is the Association for Adapted Adult Education (*Studieforbundet Funkis*), which offers courses for and by people with disabilities. A special public grant is given to these courses, as a supplement to the regular public grant.<sup>19</sup>

Some other associations among the 15 have special profiles connected to song, folk music, bands, dance and popular culture and are organized with recognized curricula. All such courses receive a public grant, which covers from 10 to 50 percent of the costs. The main costs are normally salaries for teachers and trainers. In this group, we also find the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), which started in 1931 to lead the labour movements' struggle to come to power and build a socialist society. After the Second World War, the WEA left this profile to be a normal adult education provider, offering courses both for the open market and for members of trade unions. It is still one of the largest associations in the non-formal sector, providing education in basic skills and (other) work-related subjects. WEA is the only Adult Education Association belonging to an international network: the International Federation of Workers' Educational Associations (IFWEA).

Among these associations, we find providers and courses for almost every target group in society: hunters, farmers, dog trainers, music or sport instructors and trainers, housekeepers, knitters, traditional housing carpenters and many others.

The best known among these adult education associations is the Folk High School.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Adult Education Act (2009).

<sup>19</sup> According to the rules and regulations based on the Adult Education Act.

## Folk high schools

The term ‘folk high school’ is a literal translation of the Norwegian word *folkehøgskole*. However, they are not ‘high schools’ in the sense of upper secondary school institutions designed to prepare students for colleges, universities or work through exams.<sup>20</sup> Folk high schools are separate from the rest of Norway’s educational system. Students can be any age and can have any level of educational experience. However, almost all students who attend folk high schools are young adults between the age of 18 and 25. In most of the schools, students must have passed 18 years of age before they can start.

There are 78 folk high schools in Norway. Folk high schools are residential boarding schools offering (as standard) one-year courses for young adults based on the idea of ‘learning for life’ – not for occupation or graduation. These schools provide opportunities for students to focus on subjects of personal interest and to grow as a person in a small and close-knit learning community without exams and grades. These are schools where the students can broaden their horizon, deepen their social insights, increase their self-confidence and learn tools for lifelong learning. Some schools also offer classes in Norwegian language and culture.

A year at a folk high school in Norway offers opportunities to be part of Norwegian culture, learn Norwegian, and participate in a learning community with other young people from Norway and from many other countries.

All students live on a campus in close contact with the staff and their fellow students. One important part of the folk high school experience is to form a community, inside and outside the classroom.

The folk high schools do not grant degrees or conduct exams. They are a supplement to the regular education system, with the aim of nurturing a holistic approach for human beings – both the brain and the soul. Students develop knowledge in subjects they will make use of later in life. By taking away the pressure of grades and exams, students learn to motivate themselves. They can choose among topics of personal interest, such as theatre, sports, music, creative arts, media and communications.

Each of the 78 folk high schools offers a unique curriculum, a programme of subjects in keeping with the profile of the school and the qualifications of the staff. Students come from all parts of Norway and from abroad. Diversity in the student body is valued. Most schools also include international study visits, which often include solidarity work as a part of the folk high school year.

## Distance and flexible education

A special part of Norwegian educational history is the correspondence school. The first one – the Norwegian Correspondence School (*Norsk Korrespondanseskole, NKS*), was founded in 1914. Another one, with connections to the labour move-

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<sup>20</sup> Norwegian folk high schools are different from the German Volkshochschulen, which are more similar to adult education centres and adult education associations, e.g. the Popular University.

ment and trade unions, was established in 1946: the People's Correspondence School (*Folkets Brevskole, FB*). Later, the correspondence schools developed into distance education institutions and founded their own association, first called the Norwegian Association of Correspondence Schools (*Norsk Brevskoleforbund*), founded in 1968, later called the Norwegian Association for Distance Education (*Norsk Forbund for Fjernundervisning*) and – today – Flexible Education Norway (*Fleksibel utdanning Norge, FuN*).

In the 1980s, people started talking about distance education, as radio and TV in these years were introduced at learning sites in addition to books and letters. During the 1990s, electronic education was a reality, and the former correspondence schools were pioneers in several areas, like LMS and video casting. Today, we mainly use the term 'distance learning' (*fjernundervisning*) or 'online education'.

Online education is no longer the exclusive business of a few specialist schools but rather the reality of higher education in general. With the escalating complexity of our society, and 'lifelong learning' becoming more than a catch phrase, it is about to be the business of everybody.

The objectives of FuN are to spread knowledge about online education, to heighten its professional and pedagogical standards and to strengthen the position of online education within the Norwegian educational system. The organization aims to develop online teaching methods and to support research and development of methods and techniques in the field of flexible education.

### **Adult Education Centres (*Kommunal Voksenopplæring*)**

In almost any of Norway's 420 municipalities you will find an adult education centre. On behalf of the central government, the municipalities are responsible for primary education and introductory education for foreigners (immigrants, refugees). Some of the centres – especially in the larger cities – also offer adult education at the secondary and upper secondary levels. The adult education centres are run by the municipality. The courses offered are in general free of charge, fully financed by public money according to the Education Act and the Introductory Act. This gives foreigners coming to Norway the right to attend courses in Norwegian and about Norwegian society and culture.

Most of the municipal adult education centres are members of the Association for Adult Education Centres (*Interesseorganisasjonen for kommunal voksenopplæring, IKVO*), a joint umbrella organization.

One of the largest centres is located in the capital of Oslo: *Oslo Adult Education Centre Sinsen (VO Sinsen)*. The centre was established as a project in August 2002 in Oslo, Norway. The centre follows the procedures laid down by the Ministry of Education and Research and is administered by the city of Oslo. VO Sinsen was established because of the Education Act, giving adults beyond 25 years who had not started or completed upper secondary education a legal right to a free education. From August 2005 to 2013, the school expanded with several groups at the lower secondary education level. VO Sinsen has a staff of about 85, and about 1,500 adult

students annually. All education at VO Sinsen leads to formal and official exams and diplomas. VO Sinsen has students preparing for university taking different subjects and exams needed for acceptance. The school also administers vocational education for adults in Oslo, including young and adult apprenticeship training. Vocational education is arranged both internally and externally, and VO Sinsen has students at different schools taking all kinds of vocational training, most of them preparing for work within the social and health sector. In addition to providing upper secondary education, VO Sinsen also works with the new national standards of accreditation, evaluation and validation of formal, informal and non-formal competences. The aim of this work is to reduce and adjust the need for education for adults with different backgrounds and to give credit for prior learning and experiences. The students range in age from 20 to 60 years, most of them are around 25 to 40 years old. About three quarters of the students have a foreign language background. In 2012, VO Sinsen received the national European language award. The projects are directly related to the school's strategic plan, and we experience many pedagogical benefits and great inspiration because of this type of collaboration.

### **Resource and career guidance centres (*Ressurs- og karrieresentra*)**

Education at the upper secondary level (gymnasium), with theoretical curricula preparing for university studies or vocational curricula preparing for access to working life, is a responsibility of the counties. According to the Education Act, this responsibility also covers adults. In every county, we therefore find the so-called resource and career centres, where studies at the upper secondary level are specifically adapted for adults. There is one centre in each county. In addition to this, adult education at this level can also be offered by special divisions at regular upper secondary schools. The resource and career centres also organize systems for recognition of prior learning (*realkompetansevurdering*), guidance and counselling. The students are above 25 years of age; many of them have dropped out of school.

## 7. Participation

In Norway, the mean proficiency scores of 16- to 65-year-olds in literacy and numeracy are significantly above the average of the OECD countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). Although Norway had a high score in the PIAAC survey compared to other countries, there is still a large number of adults whose basic skills need to be improved. According to PIAAC statistics, approximately 400,000 adults are at risk. That is despite the fact that more than 60 percent of the adult population in Norway attend some kind of adult education annually.

	2014		2015	
	Participants in formal education	Participants in non-formal education	Participants in formal education	Participants in non-formal education
Employed persons	15	47	16	50
Not employed	38	14	39	17

Table 2: Participation in formal and non-formal education among adults

Persons employed in professional occupations participate most frequently in non-formal education. During the last 12 months, 64 percent of professionals attended non-formal education (Statistics Norway, SSB 2015).

### Adults in basic education

In 2013/14, 76 of the 420 municipalities had participants in basic education for adults (primary and secondary school level). This means almost 10,000 persons in total. 60 percent of them enrolled in regular primary education, and 91 percent of these participants spoke Norwegian as a second language.

Year	Total number of participants	Female participants (percentage)	Minority language speakers (percentage)
2013/2014	5,965	56	91
2012/2013	5,882	53	86
2011/2012	5,648	51	90
2010/2011	5,472	53	87
2009/2010	4,100	52	81
2008/2009	3,879	58	73
2007/2008	4,128	59	70
2006/2007	4,268	58	73
2005/2006	4,363	57	72
2004/2005	4,471	57	62
2003/2004	4,208	56	56
2002/2003	3,686	57	58

Table 3: Participants in primary and lower secondary education for adults in Norway – female percentage and percentage of minority language speakers, by school year (Vox Speilet, 2014)

### Adults in upper secondary education

Almost 22,000 adults older than 25 years of age enrolled in upper secondary education in 2013. 28 percent of them were immigrants. Overall, 42 percent completed their studies, whereas 7 percent dropped out. The rest continued their studies. One out of three studied public health; one out of five studied for further studies while the rest went to vocational studies.



Measures		Number of participants (total)	Percentage		
Gender			Men	Women	Total
Year	Participation				
2013	Participants total	21,853	45	55	100
	New participants	14,485	46	54	100
	Participants that have passed their exams	9,284	50	50	100
	Participants that have interrupted their studies	1,497	39	61	100
2012	Participants total	20,090	46	54	100
	New participants	12,756	48	52	100
	Participants that have passed their exams	10,126	51	49	100
	Participants that have interrupted their studies	1,301	40	60	100
2011	Participants total	19,861	46	54	100
	New participants	12,626	47	53	100
	Participants that have passed their exams	9,882	50	50	100
	Participants that have interrupted their studies	1,380	36	64	100
2010	Participants total	20,623	47	53	100
	New participants	12,202	48	52	100
	Participants that have passed their exams	9,725	52	48	100
	Participants that have interrupted their studies	1,191	36	64	100
2009	Participants total	24,263	45	55	100
	New participants	14,403	46	54	100
	Participants that have passed their exams	11,222	48	52	100
	Participants that have interrupted their studies	924	33	67	100

Table 4: Adults participating in upper secondary education, number of participants, new participants, passed exams and interrupted studies, 2009–2013 (Vox Speilet, 2014)

### Adults in tertiary vocational education

In autumn 2013, almost 16,500 persons studied at schools for tertiary vocational training. Six out of ten were 25 years or older. More than 40 percent studied natural science, handicraft and technics. 53 percent studied part time and 31 percent on distance.

Tertiary vocational education was introduced as a new level of education with the Act Related to Tertiary Vocational Education and Training (*Lov om fagskoler*) in 2003 (see page 26). For that reason, the statistics for adults in tertiary vocational education are limited.

## Adults in higher education

More than 70,000 adults older than 30 years studied at Norwegian universities or university colleges in 2013. Two out of three were women. Almost 10 percent were first-time students. Almost 30,000 persons took part in continuing education at higher education institutions.

## Norwegian as a second language

More than 40,000 immigrants took part in Norwegian as a second language courses in the second half of 2013. In the same period, more than 36 Norwegian language tests were administered.

Measures	Number of participants			Percentage		
Gender	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
School year						
2009/2010	13,705	18,612	32,317	42	58	100
2008/2009	10,167	16,125	26,292	39	61	100
2007/2008	8,573	14,250	22,823	38	62	100
2006/2007	7,932	14,050	21,982	36	64	100
2005/2006	9,251	14,855	24,106	38	62	100
2004/2005	10,086	15,647	25,733	39	61	100
2003/2004	12,013	17,288	29,301	41	59	100
2002/2003	14,565	15,856	30,421	48	52	100

Table 5: Participants in Norwegian language training and social studies, by gender and school year  
(Vox Speilet, 2014)

## Folk high schools

In 2013, 6,737 students participated in long courses (normally 8–9 months) at the folk high schools, while 18,455 persons joined the short courses, normally weekends or one to two weeks. The numbers are quite stable over the years, but both the long and the short courses have seen a slight enrolment decline in recent years. The folk high schools do not only recruit young adults, as 56 percent of short-course participants are 50 years of age or older. Nevertheless, 95 percent of the students taking long courses are 25 years old or younger.

## Adults in non-formal adult education

In 2014, slightly more than 500,000 persons participated in around 43,000 courses run by the 15 NGO-based adult education associations.

### Courses run by the adult education associations (AEA) – duration

An average course run by AEA lasts for 31.5 hours (e.g. a language course meeting for 4 hours every week over 8 weeks). More than one-third of all courses lasts between 30 and 60 hours. This is equivalent to nearly 500,000 hours a year. Short courses (8–12 hours) have been recognized since 2010, according to the new Adult Education Act (2009). In 2014, these short courses represented only 4 percent of the total course activity.

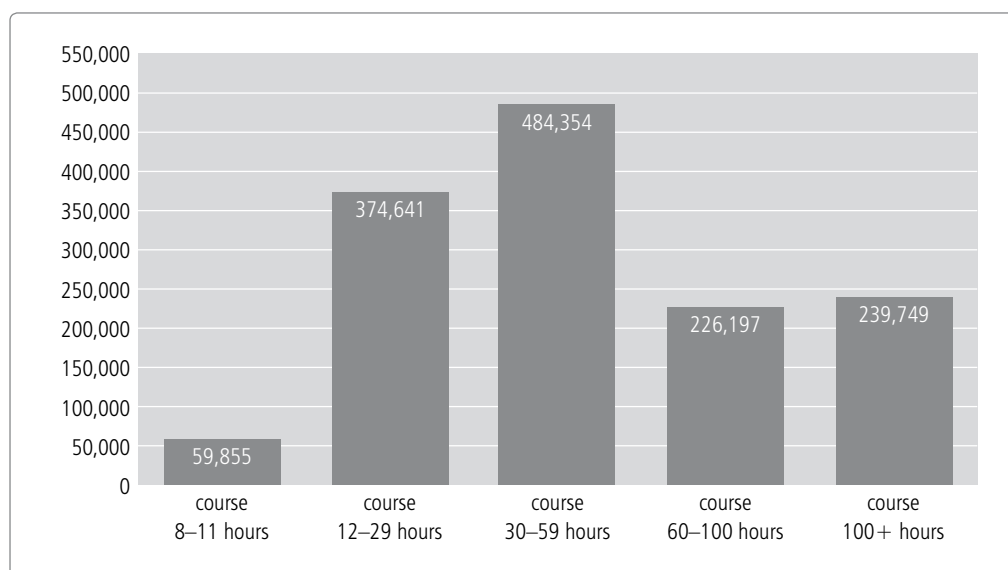


Table 6: Non-formal courses and course duration 2014

More than half a million participants took part in courses run by the adult education associations in 2014. This is the highest level since 2005. In total, participants attended approximately 44,000 courses. On average, each course has 12 participants. A typical learning hour/lesson has 5 to 9 participants/students (see figure 4). Courses with fewer than 20 participants represent 83 percent of all learning activities in the associations.

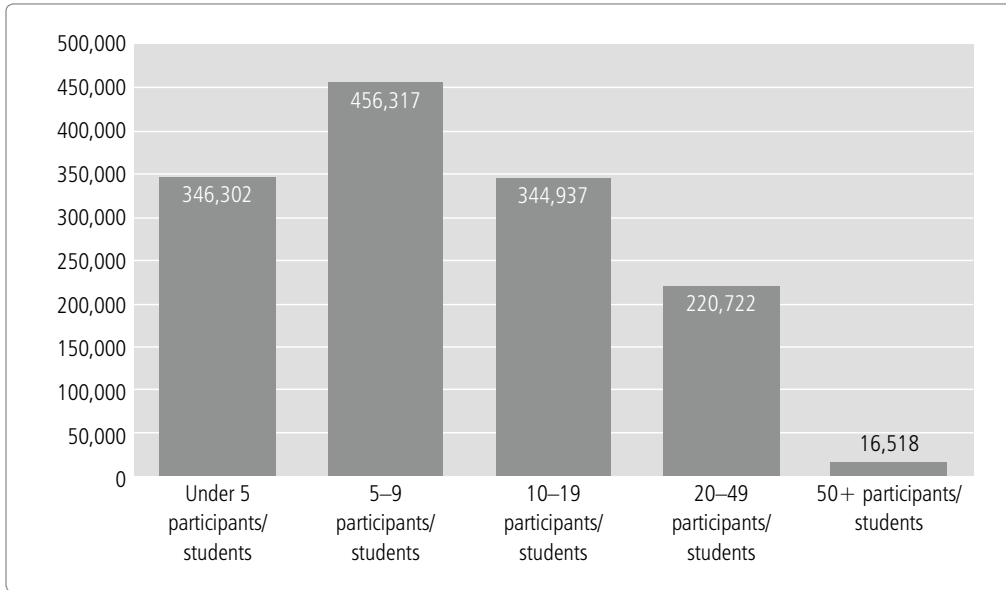


Table 7: Course hours divided on participation volume 2014

Table 7 shows a breakdown of 2014 courses by number of participants. For example, column 5 indicates that only 16,518 courses had more than 50 participants.

### Courses, categories and subjects

What are the most popular subjects for people attending non-formal courses? The following table shows that ‘Aesthetical subjects and handicraft’ attracted more than 210,000 participants in 2014. A large number of courses in this category is about song and music.

	Participants	Hours
Fields	2014	2014
Aesthetical subjects and handicraft	212,529	697,317
Management and organization development	116,202	182,053
Health and sports	60,494	148,495
Humanistic subjects, religion and faith	34,908	100,962
Ecological subjects, environment, leisure and farming	32,385	96,462
Languages	15,840	84,404
Social science and politics	11,284	25,074
Maths, industry and technics	18,243	22,960
Economy and ICT	5,683	13,335
Sales and services	777	11,232
Transport and communication	1,379	2,502
Total	509,724	1,384,796

Table 8: Courses and course subjects 2014

Aesthetical subjects, song, music, folk culture and handicraft is the largest subject category for courses at the AEAs. In 2014, half of the courses belong to these categories.

In total, there was an increase in participation and hours registered by approximately 2.5 percent from 2013 to 2014.

### Adults in distance education

In 2013, 16 distance education schools were publicly recognized, enrolling almost 12,000 students in that year. More than one out of three studied economic and administrative subjects. More than 40 percent took studies at the university level. In 2015, around 14,200 students attended distance education, a decrease of 13 percent from 2014. Two out of three students attended courses at the upper secondary school level.

### Labour market courses

Each month, almost 20,000 persons took part in labour market education organized by the labour market authorities in 2013, a slight decrease compared to 2012. These are adults registered at the authorities applying for jobs.

### Prison education

In 2013, more than half of the prisoners in Norwegian prisons were offered and took part in some kind of education. Upper secondary education is the most common offer in prisons, often combined with vocational training. Adult education centres are

integrated in some of the prisons, offering primary or secondary education as part of the activities and strategies to make a return to a 'normal' life as easy as possible.

## Programmes

### **The Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (*Basiskompetanse for arbeidslivet, BKA*)**

The aim of the BKA programme is to give adults the opportunity to acquire the basic skills they need to keep up with the demands and changes in modern working life and civil society.

Funding and participation have increased every year since the programme was established in 2006. The number of participants who have received training now exceeds 30,000.

The programme concentrates on reading, writing, numeracy, and digital skills. Commencing in 2014, the BKA programme also includes oral communication in combination with other skills. Any enterprise in Norway, private and public, can apply for funding. There has been a steady increase in demand for BKA funding in the years 2006 to 2015. A database has been established to supply up-to-date reports on the progress of the programme. The database also includes detailed information on participants (gender, formal education, industry, etc.) and thereby makes it possible to monitor the activity and to ascertain whether it reaches the intended target groups. The database will also make it easier to evaluate the long-term impact of the BKA programme.

### **Competence Goals for Adults**

The Competence Goals for Basic Skills for Adults establish national standards for reading and writing, mathematics, digital competence and oral communication. The Competence Goals are examples of local curricula in basic skills for adults. The Competence Goals are a revised version of the Competence Goals in Basic Skills for Adults. They can be used as an aid in adapting learning content for adults, irrespective of the setting in which this learning takes place. The example of a local curriculum in reading and writing as a basic skill is developed with a view to the training of adults. In addition, it may be suitable for some students at the lower and upper secondary levels.

The goals were implemented in 2013 and it is still too early to assess the effectiveness and the impact of the tool.

### **Teacher training for adult education**

A model for formal training for teachers who teach adults basic skills was developed in close cooperation with pedagogical experts from training seminars. In 2009/2010, the model was implemented in cooperation with teacher training institutes at universities and university colleges. The 30-credit training course comprises theoretical as

well as practical aspects – pedagogy and didactics. The course is provided over two semesters as a distance learning course. The model is well acknowledged, but there are still too many teachers in adult education without formal skills for teaching basic skills to adults. The white paper ‘From outsiders to a second chance’, which was launched in February 2016, proposes that all teachers teaching in the formal adult education sector should have both the practical and the formal skills to do so.

### **Formal education and training for adults**

Every year, approximately 10,000 adults receive formal education at the primary and lower secondary levels, mostly at adult education centres in municipalities. Approximately 20,000 adults participate in upper secondary education and training each year at the county-based centres. Approximately 15,000 students attend continuing education courses at public universities and university colleges. Approximately 70,000 adults participate in supplementary training courses. Moreover, approximately 500,000 adults attend non-formal courses run by the NGO-based adult education associations (Popular University and others).

Lifelong learning and adult education opportunities are important principles in Norwegian education policy. The aim is to make it possible for the adult segment of the population to strengthen their competence throughout their career pathways. The age boom in the working community makes it even more important to adapt conditions to ensure that adults can take part in training, education and competence development. The Competence Reform gave all adults a statutory right to primary and lower secondary education. Those born before 1978 were given the right to upper secondary education and training if they had not completed this kind of education earlier. The education and training must be adapted to the individual’s formal, non-formal and informal qualifications, and to the individual’s needs. In 2001, adults over 25 were given the right to admission to universities and university colleges based on formal, non-formal and informal qualifications. Municipalities are responsible for primary and lower secondary education for adults, whereas the county authorities are responsible for upper secondary education and training. Adult education associations and distance education institutions also offer courses at these levels.

In addition, the universities and university colleges are important providers of continuing education and supplementary courses above the primary and secondary levels.

Seen as a whole, the number of adults taking part both in regular study programmes and in continuing education has increased since the beginning of the 1990s. One of the main challenges is to develop and offer good courses for adults with poor basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic and the use of ICT. Municipalities can offer this kind of education. The Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA) funds enterprises and public institutions that initiate education in basic skills for their employees or potential employees.

Eurostat statistics indicate that the percentage of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training in Norway is above the EU average. In 2011,

18.2 percent of the population aged 25 to 64 participated in education and training, compared to the EU average of 8.9 percent (Eurostat 2012). Statistics show that the number of completed trade and journeyman's certificates is almost as high for adults over 24 years as it is for young people under 24, see the table below.

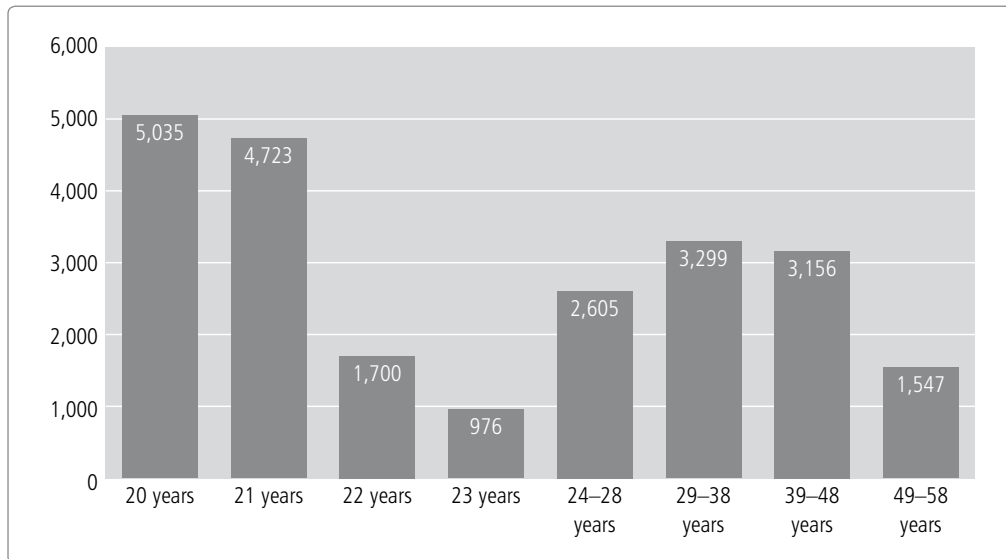


Table 9: Completed trade and journeyman's certificate in 2011/2012 by age  
(Source: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013)

One reason for this could be the existing second-chance arrangements for those who dropped out of the education system. Another reason could be that adults without completed primary and/or secondary education have a statutory right to get this education offered by municipal and/or county authorities. Adults may also study at tertiary institutions on the same terms that apply to young people. All education and training provided by public institutions is free of charge for all levels. Dropping out of upper secondary education and training is not necessarily a definitive stop in education. The opportunities for recognition of prior learning and experience can solve recurrent education anytime.

### White paper on 'outcasts'

The government presented a white paper on *Fra utenforskap til ny sjanse* ('From outsiders to a second chance') in February 2016. The white paper focuses on those groups which for different reasons have fallen out of the education system and the labour market – the 'outcasts' or 'outsiders': unemployed persons, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, drop outs from schools – the latter often young men between 20 and 30 years of age. Here, Norway faces many of the same challenges as most other European countries. The present government in Norway focuses on basic skills for 'outcasts' as a precondition for access to working life. All providers of lifelong learning and basic skills are considered as contributors to the government's priorities.



## 8. Staff and Professionalism

Adult education is a mixed field. Not many persons are engaged in this field exclusively. Teachers whose daytime job is in primary and secondary education, for example, teach adult education classes in the evenings. This is the case both in the adult education associations and in the adult education centres at the municipality level, though the latter do employ both teachers and administrators full or part time. The associations also have administrative staff but the secretariats are quite small – one to ten persons are employed there on average. The municipality-based centres have a few persons as permanent staff, as most of the municipalities in Norway are small. In the larger cities though, the number of staff members can come up to one hundred (full or part time).

At the county-based centres (upper secondary level for adults and career guidance), the employed people have combined positions, for instance working half time in adult education and half time teaching upper secondary school for young students.

The typical professional staff dealing with adult education is found at Vox, at the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning, the Popular Universities and at WEA Norway.

At universities and university colleges, just a handful of persons deal with adult education, and not with adult education only.

Teaching adults does not require a special educational background or a specific certificate in adult education or andragogy. To be formally educated as a teacher or to be fit or skilled for the task is accepted and recognized as a qualification.

### Programme for adult educators

The Ministry of Education aims to strengthen the quality of teachers in adult education and has set up a four-year programme spending 25 million NOK (app. € 2.4 million) to stimulate courses on teaching adults and on ‘how adults learn’. The programme runs from 2013 to 2016.

Vox is responsible for the programme. It contains both general pedagogy/andragogy and didactics for basic skills (reading and writing, maths and ICT). Alone or in cooperation with the counties’ educational authorities, Vox runs one- or two-day courses for adult educators all over the year. So far, no participant figures are available.

A minor part of the programme for adult educators offers courses for teachers in non-formal adult learning and education. In 2014, almost 200 teachers attended these courses.

## **Professionalization and international cooperation**

Norwegian adult educators participate in seminars and projects in other European countries. Especially projects funded by the EU (Grundtvig, Erasmus+) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (Nordplus Adult) are important for the professionalization of teachers and other staff in adult education. In Norway, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (*Senter for internasjonalisering av utdanning, SIU*) coordinates these projects. SIU is a Norwegian public sector agency that promotes international cooperation in education and research.

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) runs a course for younger staff in adult education every year. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) runs an ‘International Academy for Lifelong Learning Advocacy’ every year. So far, Norway has had just two to three participants in these courses.

The EAEA course trains new and younger staff at European associations for adult learning to do both political and pedagogical work related to adult education in their countries.

The ICAE course trains young adult educators from all over the world to be better advocates for basic skills, literacy and other forms of adult education back in their home countries.

## 9. Research and Higher Education

So far, Norway does not have a professorial chair in adult education, whereas other Scandinavian countries do have such academic positions. Research on adult learning and higher education is limited in Norway. A special institute for research in this field, established in Trondheim in 1977, does no longer have this role. Interest in research in adult and lifelong learning at universities and other research institutes is very low. The former institute in Trondheim is today an integrated faculty at the University for Technology and Science in Trondheim and deals with both lifelong learning and career guidance for adults. The institute runs a master's programme in adult education for a small number of students.

The University of Oslo – the largest in the country – has so far not recognized adult education as a special field for academic studies and research, looking at the field as a special branch of pedagogy. The other universities and university colleges are too small to have the resources for or interest in research in the field.

However, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (Vox) does a lot of development work.<sup>21</sup>

One research project commissioned by Vox on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research and conducted by a private research institute seated in Kristiansand (Oxford Research) is about participation and participatory satisfaction in non-formal adult education, called *En ordning – et mangfold av løsninger* ('One organization – a multitude of solutions', Kristiansand 2013). This research revealed good results for Norwegian non-formal learning. Courses by NGOs provide both high learning outcomes and high social benefits. One of the findings was that 92 percent of the participants in the survey would recommend the courses they attended to others. The report summarizes research on the non-formal courses offered by the NGO-based adult education associations and their NGO member organizations.

The focus of the research has been on courses organized within the framework of the Adult Education Act from 2009, and it will help evaluate the effects of the Act.

The total number of participants registered in NGO courses in 2012 was 477,719. This is a quite high number. The proportion of immigrants taking courses is about 14 percent, whereas the proportion of immigrants in the total population is about 13,1 percent. From this, the report concludes that these courses are for everybody.

The participants responded to 27 different statements about outcomes. These were clustered into four different categories: personal outcome, social outcome, cultural outcome and learning/motivational outcome. The result was clearly that participants in these courses experience high learning outcomes and are motivated to further learning.

<sup>21</sup> Norsk Voksenpedagogisk Institutt, later on Norsk Voksenpedagogisk Research Institute (The Institute for Research in Adult Education in Norway). In 2000, the institute became a department at Vox. In 2005, it left Vox and merged with the University of Science and Technology in Trondheim.

The courses included in this research cover a wide field of organizations and subjects – from languages to handicrafts and from choir singing to leadership.

Every year, Vox launches a report called ‘The Vox Mirror’ (*Vox-speilet*), which mirrors adults’ participation in different fields of learning. The Vox Mirror is an annual statistics report, which presents data from the whole country regarding the participation of adults in learning activities.

The purpose of compiling this report has been to strengthen the statistical basis and the knowledge basis in an area that has had few figures reported so far. The statistics cover both formal and non-formal education and training fully or partly funded by public budgets.

## **BRAIN (Barriers and drivers regarding adult education, skills acquisition and innovative activity)**

The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (Nordisk Institutt for Forskning i Utdanning, NIFU) has been granted funding from the Norwegian Research Council for a three-year project on adult learning. The aim of the project is to develop new knowledge of the relationships between adult learning and national systems of education and training and the organization of work.

The name of the project is BRAIN (Barriers and drivers regarding adult education, skills acquisition and innovative activity). It started in the spring of 2014 and will last until spring 2017. This is an internationally comparative project that sheds light on the impacts of adult learning across sectors, branches of industry and countries.

Central to the project is the study of different forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning. One important question is how motivational factors for training and drivers linked to the national institutional frameworks interact and affect the differences in training rates and skills levels between four Northern European welfare states.

The project aims at contributing to an explanation of seemingly puzzling findings at the national level concerning adult skills, participation in adult learning and the rate of innovation output in firms/organizations.

PIAAC data, especially from Norway, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, will constitute the main source of data. It will be supplemented with qualitative data, in addition to other comparative data, such as Community Innovation Surveys (CIS). The study involves participation from different institutions and international scholars. The project includes four sub-projects:

- skills levels and skills acquisition;
- participation in adult learning;
- training, skills and innovation and
- learning processes in enterprises.

In addition to the University of Stavanger, there are partners at universities/research institutions in Finland, the Netherlands and the United States, as well as advisors at institutions in Nice and Oslo.

## **Research on further and continuing education provision**

In December 2015, NIFU finished a study on further and continuing education in Norway, conducted on behalf of Vox. The study generated advanced knowledge about providers and provision in the field. The mapping will cover EVU in universities and university colleges, public and private tertiary vocational schools (fagskoler) and other providers, including continuing education offered as in-service training by public and private companies.

Earlier studies and international comparisons have revealed that Norway on average has a high level of participation in further and continuing education. For example, regarding the numbers of employed people participating in some kind of learning, Norway scores as number four in Eurostat's Adult Education Survey (Eurostat/AES, 2011).

Another research on further and continuing education offered by private companies shows that Norway has the highest share of companies with EVU provisions of all countries in the research area (Eurostat/CVTS, 2010). According to NIFU, other international studies complete this picture. Anyway, most studies have focused on participation, less on provision. This study will look especially at the provision part.



## 10. International Framework

As a small country, Norway gains a lot by being internationally oriented both in adult education and in other fields of education. Norway is not a full member of the European Union, but as an EES country, it takes part in both the EU educational programmes, which also cover adults (Erasmus+), and the research programme Horizon 2020. Norway has participated in the OECD surveys covering adults, such as ALL, IALS and last but not least PIAAC. When releasing the PIAAC results for Norway, the country agreed to ask OECD to develop a skills strategy for Norway. This work is still ongoing, and a PIAAC report comparing the Nordic countries is underway.

Nordic cooperation in adult education is a long-standing tradition, starting more than 50 years ago. The Nordic Council started its work in 1948, and the Nordic Council of Ministers shortly after. A special Nordic Folk High School was established near Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1948. Twenty years later, in 1968, the Nordic Council of Ministers started and funded a centre for further and continuing education for teachers and other staff in the Nordic folk high schools, adult education associations and other providers (e.g. prison education). This institution was called the Nordic Folk Academy (*Nordens Folkliga Akademi*, NFA) and had employees and students from all the Nordic countries, with an interpretation service between the Scandinavian languages and the Finnish language as a speciality. The Academy closed in 2004 due to decision in the Nordic Council. One year later, it was replaced by the Nordic Network for Adult Education (NVL).

The non-formal adult education sector is actively involved in international cooperation through membership in the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). As Norway is not a EU-member, the EAEA's policy work with the EU bureaucracy in Brussels is especially important. As a country with long traditions in international development cooperation, Norway's ICAE membership is important when discussing literacy, other basic skills and lifelong learning as development tools. For many years, up to 2012, Norway offered project and core funding for ICAE through NORAD – the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Vox has many international links and coordinates the European Basic Skills Network, for example.

NORAD has also been one of the funders of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg. UIL has a focus on literacy, basic skills and adult education, and as such serves as a collaborative partner for Vox and other stakeholders in Norwegian adult education.

Furthermore, Norway's strong teachers' union is actively involved in Education International.

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## Sources and useful addresses

AOF/WEA – The Workers' Educational Association  
[www.aof.no](http://www.aof.no)

FU/Folkeuniversitetet – the Popular Universities  
[www.fu.no](http://www.fu.no)

Funkis – the Association for Adapted Adult Education  
[www.funkis.no](http://www.funkis.no)

IFWEA – International Federation of Workers' Education Association  
[www.ifwea-org.directo.fi](http://www.ifwea-org.directo.fi)  
E-mail: [ifweasecretariat@lrs.org.za](mailto:ifweasecretariat@lrs.org.za)

IKVO – Interesseorganisasjonen for kommunal voksenopplæring - Association for Adult Education Centres  
[www.ikvo.no](http://www.ikvo.no)

Nordisk Ministerråd - Nordic Council of Ministers  
Nordplus Programme  
[www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org)  
Phone: (+45) 33 96 02 00  
E-mail: [nmr@norden.org](mailto:nmr@norden.org)

NIFU – Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education  
[www.nifu.no](http://www.nifu.no)  
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E-mail: [post@nifu.no](mailto:post@nifu.no)

NVL - Nordic Network for Adult Learning  
[www.nvl.org](http://www.nvl.org)  
Phone: (+47) 23 38 13 00  
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SIU – The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education  
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The Folk High School Council  
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The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet)

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The Norwegian Parliament – Stortinget

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The Sami Institute

<http://samiinstitute.com>

VOFO – The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning

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Vox – The Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning

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UDI – The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

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## Universities and Colleges

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Norges musikkhøgskole/Noregs musikkhøgskole	Norwegian State Academy of Music	Pb. 5190 Majorstua 0302 Oslo	<a href="http://www.nmh.no">www.nmh.no</a>
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Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus	Oslo and Akershus university college of applied sciences	Pb. 4 0130 Oslo	<a href="http://www.hio.no">www.hio.no</a>
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## Abstract

The European arena of lifelong learning offers rich country-specific portfolios of historical trajectories, policy frameworks and practical evidence of adult and continuing education. This book provides an introduction to the case of Norway and outlines the key features of the Norwegian system alongside issues such as political and legal agendas, schemes of participation, provision and financing or trends in professionalization, research areas and transnational linkages. Through the lens of adult and continuing education, the author invites researchers, practitioners, students and persons interested in international-comparative perspectives to a tour d’horizon of the Norwegian lifelong learning landscape.

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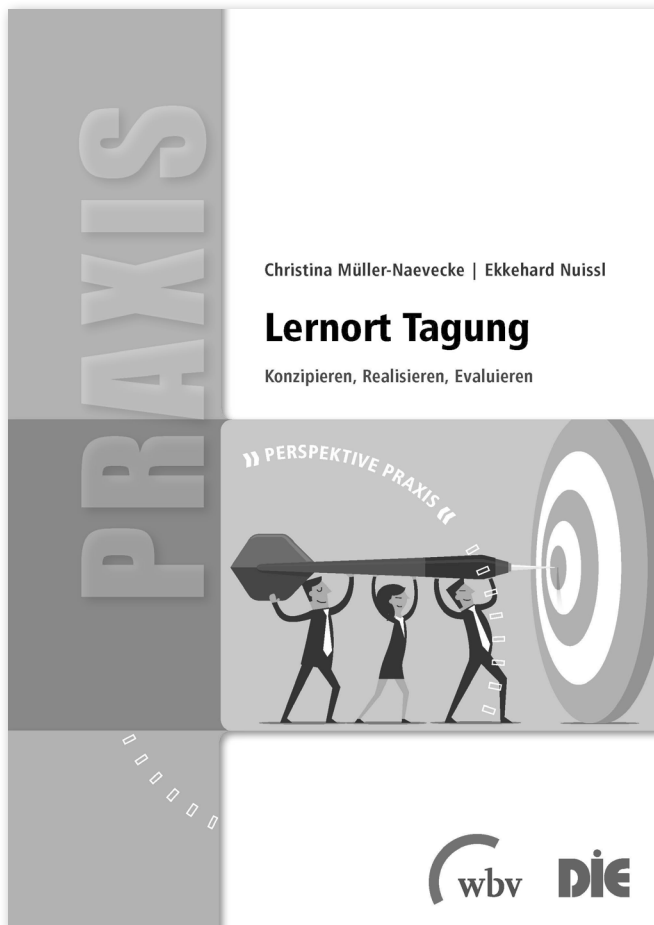
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## Adult and Continuing Education in Norway

This publication gives an overview of central aspects of adult and continuing education in Norway. Sturla Bjerkaker presents a range of data and information regarding adult and continuing education institutions, financing, provision, participation, staff and international relationships. He describes adult and continuing education in Norway taking into consideration the political, geographical, and cultural context as well as the current economic situation.

This book offers a brief and systematic introduction and guides the reader through the system of adult and continuing education in Norway.